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THE CENSUS LAWS.

IF the object of the framers of the Constitution had been to form either a consolidated Government, or a confederation of equal sovereign states, the general enumeration of all citizens would not have been a necessary provision of fundamental law. But since the States composing the Union are regarded as equal units in certain views and for certain purposes, while for others their rank and weight are determined by the number of their inhabitants, it became a political necessity to provide for a census at regular intervals. Advantage was early taken of the machinery created by law for this purpose, to gather in addition some statistics of industry and mortality. Before the close of the last century, the American Philosophical Society, of which Thomas Jefferson was president, memorialized Congress on this subject, representing that "the decennial census offered an occasion of great value for ascertaining sundry facts highly important to society and not otherwise to be obtained." It therefore prayed that "the next census might be so taken as to present a more detailed view of the inhabitants of the United States under several different aspects." A similar memorial was presented by the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, through its president, Timothy Dwight.

Attention to the possibilities of the census having thus been drawn by thoughtful men, a series of tentative extensions of the work has followed. The population schedule was considerably enlarged in 1800, and in 1810 the Secretary of State, then charged with the execution of the work, made the first systematic endeavor to obtain the statistics of the industries of the country. Lack of experience and organization rendered the results of little value, and it was not until 1840 that any reasonable measure of exactness was obtained. The importance of the subject was, however, now so generally recognized, that in 1849 the law was carefully remodeled

in accordance with the recommendations of several eminent statisticians, and the scope of the census was enlarged to include all the varied uses to which modern statistics are applicable. The control of the work was placed under the newly created Department of the Interior, the office of Superintendent of the Census was created, and the value of accurate social, industrial, and civil statistics received a distinct legal recognition.

The census of the United States is an unforeseen development of the germ contained in the Constitution, and the word itself signifies for Americans much more than it did originally. The results of the inquiry which at first were contained in an octavo pamphlet of fifty-two pages, and procured at an expense of \$44,000, were embodied in 1870 in three large quartos and a series of maps and graphic representations, costing in all \$3,300,000. Our decennial contribution to the data of political science is in no wise unworthy of a great nation, although perhaps we can not claim to deserve the eulogium of Moreau de Jounés when he declared that "the United States presented a phenomenon without parallel in history, that of a people who instituted the statistics of their country on the same day when they founded their government, and who regulated by the same instrument the census of the inhabitants, their civil and political rights, and the destinies of the nation."

The new and valuable features of the law of 1850 were the creation of a separate bureau in the Department of the Interior with a single responsible head, and the authoritative recognition of the importance of industrial and economic statistics. The growth of the work was like the growth of the country, in magnitude chiefly. No organic change was made in the machinery, though experience had shown that the plan was radically faulty. The execution of the work was still charged upon the United States marshals, and carried out by deputies who were not directly responsible to the Superintendent. This necessitated, of course, making the judicial districts the primary geographical divisions or census districts; an obviously inadequate arrangement, for in the thickly settled parts of the country the regular work of the marshal's office was too important to allow them to give the necessary supervision to new and extra duties, and in other places the districts were so large that it was impossible to complete the enumeration in the one hundred days contemplated by the law. In consequence the time was necessarily extended, and full returns were not received until nearly a year had elapsed from the inception of the work. The compen-

sation was unequal, and the provision for extra pay was an allowance for mileage at the "rate of ten cents a mile, the whole number of miles traveled to be ascertained by multiplying the square root of the number of dwelling-houses by the square root of the number of square miles in the subdivision," a formula which, though it has a scientific sound, is evidently too rigid and clumsy for practical use, and hardly needs the high authority of Professor Peirce to be pronounced "radically defective and vicious in its underlying mathematical principle." In spite of these disadvantages the census of 1870 is a monument of technical and executive ability. Its merits are largely due to the hereditary talent and energy of the Superintendent, who by a good fortune rare to this republic of political patronage, brings his ripened culture and experience to the supervision of the present one. It is a case in which there can be no rational objection to a third or fourth term.

The law under which the census of 1880 is being taken presents some important modifications, the need for which was clearly shown in General Walker's last report. It still leaves the census office as a bureau of the Department of the Interior, the Superintendent to be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, the clerks and computers to be appointed by the Secretary. The Superintendent divides the country into districts, and the President appoints a supervisor for each district, who also must be confirmed by the Senate. The responsibility would be less divided if the Secretary or the Superintendent appointed the supervisors; but the method of the law is perhaps more in accordance with our theory of the executive. It has worked well, because in 1880 the President and Superintendent were in accord in supposing that the duties of a supervisor were to supervise the taking of the census, and not solely his own canvas for some petty office. But it is not impossible that we may have in the future a President who may regard offices as political rewards.

The supervisors subdivide their districts, and employ enumerators with the consent of the Superintendent. By a regulation of the office, every enumerator is required to report every day by postal card to his supervisor, and also to Washington, the amount of work he has done during the day. The effect of this check on indolence and procrastination will be very great. By it the Superintendent has direct control over the *personnel* of his entire corps, and will be enabled to hold his work well in hand, and to see that every private of his great army is on the march. An enumeration

to be thorough must not be desultory or protracted. General Walker possesses in a marked degree the quality—perhaps the most valuable one in an executive chief—of inspiring his subordinates with a portion of his own zeal. His bulletins of instruction are models of their kind, and go far toward informing the most ignorant with some idea of what a census should be.

The law provides that the “enumerators shall be selected without reference to their political or party affiliations.” This is so new and startling an idea in American politics, that in some districts no Democrat made application. They thought there “was some catch in it.” “They feared the Greeks, even when offering gifts.”

The second important change in the law is contained in the section which authorizes the Superintendent to “withdraw, whenever he shall deem it expedient, the schedules for manufacturing and social statistics from the enumerators of the several subdivisions, and to charge the collection of these statistics upon experts and special agents, to be employed without reference to locality, and to employ experts and special agents to investigate, in their economic relations, the manufacturing, railroad, fishing, mining, and other industries of the country, and the statistics of telegraph, express, transportation, and insurance companies.” This introduces into the theory of census-taking the modern idea of division of labor, and enlarges its scope far beyond the primary conception of a mere instrument to gather material. The machinery, which hitherto has increased in magnitude only, now suffers an organic change, and is differentiated into separate branches adapted to different functions. Its powers for the higher work of classification and induction are developed. In consequence, its efficiency in every department is increased. The enumerators are relieved from a perplexing part of their duties, and are able to keep their minds fixed definitely on the special objects they are best fitted to accomplish. The result must be a more rapid and perfect enumeration, and presumably a more thorough and scientific examination of special branches of industry. And further, it is probable that the entire cost will be less than under the former law.

Under this section, the following subjects have been committed to special experts :

The manufacture of cotton, to Edward Atkinson ; the culture of cotton, to Professor E. W. Hilgar ; the culture of tobacco, to John C. Killibrew ; mining, west of the Mississippi, to Clarence King ;

mining, east of the Mississippi, to Raphael Pumpelly ; manufacture of woollens, to George W. Bond ; coke, glass, and wages in manufacturing and mining communities, to James D. Weeks ; manufactures of iron and steel, to James D. Swank ; the fisheries, to Professor Goode ; prisons, to F. H. Wines ; cities in their industrial aspects, to Professor William Trowbridge ; cities in their sanitary and civil aspects, to Colonel Waring ; railroads, to J. H. Goodspeed ; the production and transportation of meat, to Clarence Gordon ; agriculture, to J. R. Dodge ; forestry and the lumbering industry, to Professor Charles Sargent ; ship-building, to the Hon. John Lynch ; and silk industry, to William C. Wyckoff.

The names of the above gentlemen are a sufficient guarantee of the wisdom of the law, and, if nothing more than a monograph on their specialties were expected from them, it would be a notable addition to the sum of existing knowledge.

The statistics of the production of gold and silver have heretofore been gathered, by reason of the remote and difficult nature of the country where they are mined, chiefly by correspondence, a most exasperatingly insufficient method. The successful establishments are as desirous of concealment as the unsuccessful ones are of exaggeration. The reports of mints and express companies furnish a check on the totals, but the method of sending on to the spot practical experts armed with authority, whose characters are above suspicion, and who are acquainted with the business and with the peculiar types of humanity developed by it, is the only means of procuring trustworthy details. In view of the fact that mining investments are attracting more attention than ever before, and that they are generally made without the slightest reference to real values, the worth of Mr. King's forthcoming report can hardly be exaggerated.

Mr. Pumpelly will furnish, in addition to full statistics of production, a complete set of analyses of the iron-ores of the United States, from samples taken by his experts. These results will not only be interesting in a scientific point of view, as indicating the distribution of the iron-ores, but will furnish a guide to the iron-master as to where he may look for the various ores he needs to combine, and where they can best be brought together for reduction. Hitherto, the State geological surveys have furnished the most reliable information on these points. They have generally been under the direction of competent and painstaking geologists, but their standpoints and nomenclature have differed, and their

efficiency has been hampered by insufficient means and by the necessity of obtaining immediate results. It is to be hoped that unworthy and disheartening jealousies will not tie the hands of the newly established United States geological survey, which aims at coördinating and perfecting the work of the State surveys, now for the most part abandoned.

In addition to statistics proper, several of the special agents gather materials for a general survey of industrial communities and the relations between laborers and employers, as illustrated by trades-unions, strikes, coöperative associations, etc. "The precarious and jealous nature of the union between capital and labor is the most alarming characteristic of modern society." A true understanding of the conditions is the first requisite of any attempt at amelioration. The attention of the public is generally called to labor organizations under circumstances likely to embitter feelings on both sides. The imperfect reasonings and warped judgments of the men, and the violence that is too apt to characterize their actions, prevent their case from being fairly presented. In fact, the public may be said to be substantially ignorant of this most important subject. The great problem for us is "how to make such use of our freedom as to advance to better relations between capital and labor; and the great force of modern civilization is American public opinion."

Political economy is so obscure and complex a subject that inductions can be drawn in it only from the widest range of data. At present, the United States offers the best field for progress in this science. Its reasoners have generally dealt with abstract conditions, the A who sells goods to B, and the C who employs D, forgetting, apparently, that A and B are not equal factors, but bundles of prejudice and ignorance, whose action can not be averaged or predicted. Our country, from the simplicity of its social structure, the mobility and versatility of its citizens, and the fact that it is the largest area in the civilized world where trade is free, is the place where the natural laws of political economy work with the least friction, and where new discoveries will be most readily made. But for that very reason absolutely reliable statistics are especially valuable to the United States.

Whatever the success of the census now in operation—and there is no reason to doubt that it will be very encouraging—one thing is assured: it will demonstrate what are the best methods. The inquiries of the special agents are based on several different plans, and their combined experience must result in an increase of technical

skill and knowledge of gathering statistics. It is no small achievement to bring all the details of an organization like the census office to the highest point of working efficiency. Methods, theoretically perfect, and which would perhaps give accurate results in Connecticut, will fail if applied to Georgia. Questions which seem simplest will prove misleading even to men familiar with the subject. It is as dangerous to ask too much as to ask too little. Trade jealousies will be aroused when least expected, so as to nullify some branches of the inquiry. Hitherto the experience of each successive census has served, in some sort, as a warping port by which to drag the next up to a higher point of excellence. The census of 1880 will be a practical test of an improved method, whose working details must be perfected by experience.

CHARLES F. JOHNSON.